

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



Office of Public Information

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NEW FRIEND OF THE COURT BUREAU HEAD NAMED BY MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT

LANSING, MI, November 1, 2002 – Attorney Daniel J. Wright, Special Assistant to Chief Justice Maura D. Corrigan, will head the Friend of the Court Bureau for the State Court Administrative Office, the Michigan Supreme Court announced today.

Since his appointment as Special Assistant in December 2001, Wright has focused on child support issues, including the state's conversion to the federally-mandated Child Support Enforcement System (CSES), a computer module that permits tracking of child support payments on a national basis. Corrigan said Wright's experience with CSES and child support issues in general "make him a natural choice to lead the Friend of the Court Bureau."

The Friend of the Court Bureau (FOCB) develops and recommends guidelines for conduct, operations, and procedures of Michigan's Friend of the Court offices. The FOCB also trains Friend of the Court employees, tracks and maintains statistics, suggests changes to legislation and court rules, and develops the Michigan child support formula. Other FOCB functions include developing and implementing CSES in Michigan.

"This is a very demanding position," Corrigan said. "We estimate that one in three people in Michigan are involved with the Friend of the Court, so we are serving a huge population. The job of heading the Friend of the Court Bureau requires someone of Mr. Wright's abilities and experience."

Wright said that the FOCB's "first priority will be customer service.

"We want to make sure we have a procedure for tracking complaints, sharing those complaints with Friends of the Court and circuit court chief judges, and getting appropriate responses," Wright said.

Wright said the FOCB will also play a leadership role "in continuing implementation of CSES."

As of January 1, 2001, ten Michigan counties' Friend of the Court offices had not converted to CSES, and the state faced millions of dollars in federal penalties. All ten counties, including Wayne County, converted to CSES by the October 1 deadline. Michigan now awaits federal certification of the CSES system. If certified, Michigan could recoup millions of dollars in federal sanctions that the state has already paid, in addition to avoiding future penalties. While CSES is managed by the state's Department of Information Technology, Corrigan has said the system's success "is a top priority of this Court."

Before becoming Special Assistant to the Chief Justice, Wright was a Commissioner of the Supreme Court, beginning in November 1989. Supreme Court Commissioners are responsible for reviewing and researching the over 2,000 cases that come before the Court each year.

A native of Detroit, Wright graduated in 1970 from Marquette University with a B.A. in journalism. In 1973, he received his law degree from the University of Detroit Law School, where he graduated *magna cum laude*. Wright worked as a practicing attorney from 1973 until 1989. He served six years with the State Appellate Defender Office in Detroit, representing indigent defendants in felony cases in appeals to the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court, as well as in post-conviction proceedings in trial courts all over the state.

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